

Mexico's Social Problem

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Reflections on Mexico
A Query and an Answer

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Mexico's Social Problem

BY A MEXICAN LAWYER

WE all know how easily a lie is propagated, and how difficult it soon becomes to counteract its evil effects. It seems that only time can hush the far-reaching echoes of falsehood. Voltaire's fiendish maxim, "Lie, lie always; something of it will remain," claims in many cases the sanction of worldly wisdom and experience. But every lover of truth should proclaim it boldly whenever occasion demands, and to be as insistent on doing so as are the followers of the father of lies in their ignoble task.

A pernicious lie which calls for exposure at the present time is that which attributes Mexico's actual revolution to a deep-rooted and persistent social problem. If there is a country in the world where such a question does not exist it is Mexico. This nation is facing many problems, as many as, or more than other lands, but a social question, properly so-called, in the sense of any serious antagonism or conflict between the classes and masses of the people, between the poor and the rich, servants and masters, or, to use the modern terms, labor and capital, has been and is unknown in Mexico. However bold this assertion may seem, when speaking of the classic "land of unrest," it is nevertheless true, as the following paper may demonstrate. And if truth, and only truth, can render us free, Mexico's knotty problem will only be disentangled through an honest study of past and present realities.

In order to fathom the present social conditions of Mexico, some historical antecedents should be kept in mind and some distinctions established without which confusion and doubt will continue to exist. The early history of Mexico has been fairly written and widely read. English and American authors have vied with the Spanish and French in giving interesting accounts, not only of the great epic of the Spanish conquest by Cortes, but of Mexico's subsequent annals. We can, therefore, refer to these in the following historical criticism presuming that the reader will understand our drift and its importance as regards the subject under consideration.

In speaking of Mexico, it is essential not to confound the Mexico of 1521 with that of 1810; nor again this latter date of its history with 1821. Such mistakes or errors have given rise to serious troubles in the past and threaten to be again followed with evil consequences in the future. They are at the root of Mexico's present chaotic conditions.

No historical research, much less any stretch of the imagination can make out, as has been at times pretended, that the conditions of the inhabitants of Anahuac, afterwards New Spain, were not immensely improved by the Spanish conquest as realized in 1521. On this point the best authorities are unanimous. The control of Mexico by the Spanish nation was, in spite of human deficiencies, and due allowance being made for the spirit of the times and the character of the conquerors, the substitution of civilization for barbarity, of religion for idolatry, and of light for darkness. In its wake came all that makes for the material, domestic, social, political and religious betterment of the country and its inhabitants.

Says Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta:

The old régime was entirely despotic. A sort of aristocracy oppressed and taxed the common people, while prostrating itself in abject ceremony before the frowning monarch whose will was absolute and had to be obeyed implicitly. The right of conquest was supreme and war the normal condition of the land; a war without mercy, in which prisoners were carefully spared on the battlefield only to be killed in cold blood on the sacrificial stone of the temples, where thousands of slaves likewise perished. Individual property did not exist. The lords, petty and high, the warriors, the priests, all lived at the expense of the miserable people who groaned under heavy tributes, and being deprived of all instruction, lived under the iron rule of the aristocracy. A cruel religion cast a dark pall over the country and constantly demanded torrents of human blood. Contemporary witnesses unite in laying stress upon the poverty and degradation of the people, sunk as they were in ignorance, listless of the present, and without hope for the future. Their situation was intolerable and their discontent universal, the best proof of this being the ease with which Cortes found allies as soon as he set foot in the country. When a nation unites with the strangers that come to overthrow its rulers, it offers a visible proof that it can no longer bear the latter, and hurls the most terrible accusation against those who have so misused their power as to obliterate in the people their inborn feeling of independence and patriotism.

The same author goes on to state that the worst threat against the Indians was to say they would be given back to their former masters. After Cuatemotzin's death resistance on the part of the Mexicans entirely ceased in every part of the Empire. The Indians had, nevertheless, many favorable opportunities of shaking off the Spanish rule, as for instance during Cortes' expedition to Honduras, whither he led the flower of his warriors. But neither then nor ever afterwards did the Mexicans revolt.

As regards the success of the Catholic Church in Mexico, nothing can be more significant than the will-

ingness with which the Indians were converted in vast numbers to Christianity, and their eagerness to destroy their temples and idols. Some of the early missionaries were severely taxed in the work of receiving them into the Church. The famous Friar Motolinia alone is known to have baptized 400,000 Indians with his own hand. Not many years after the conquest, practically the whole land had become Christian. In subsequent years, owing to the paternal and wise rule of the Kings of Spain and their Viceroy, most of them remarkable governors, no pains were spared to defend the rights of the Indian and to educate and uplift him in the way of morality and civilization. Indeed, on reading history, especially the lives of such men as Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, and Fray Juan Zumarraga, one is particularly struck with two facts: first, the great liberty with which churchmen pleaded the cause of the Indians before the absolute Kings of Spain; and secondly, the constant solicitude of those monarchs in behalf of their distant subjects in New Spain. Nothing can be more in contrast than this conduct and that which in other countries led to the extermination of the natives as a system. Thus were the Mexican Indians to a large extent fused and amalgamated with the Spaniards, and it is only due to subsequent bad government that the Mexican nation has not become more and more a homogeneous race.

It is, therefore, true historically that long before 1810 the Indian empire of the Aztecs had completely disappeared and its elements had been merged into those which came from Spain. In consequence, the men who initiated the independence of Mexico in the nineteenth century committed a fatal error in pretending to ignore this fact, and in wishing to sink into oblivion the history,

the customs, the religion and traditions of nearly 300 years. This mistake was a disaster to themselves and to the country which they intended to free. We do not mean to criticize Mexico's independence. It was perhaps timely. In nations, as in individuals, the instinct of freedom is a natural one, just as we consider natural and necessary the severing of a ripened fruit from the tree, or the independent career of a grown-up child who leaves his parents' home. But the false and absurd premise, that Mexico was still the Aztec Empire after three centuries and had to shake off the Spanish domination and all that came with it, was pernicious in the last degree. Only those who have sounded the depths of human malice can conceive how the desire of independence could seek as its foundation in Mexico a chasm of national disunion and the marshaling of antagonistic forces which in reality did not exist. Nevertheless, this idea was crystallized into a system by all the professional agitators in this country, and being embodied, as it afterwards was in the Liberal party, has been the source of all Mexico's troubles. As a matter of fact, that system has never achieved anything good or permanent either in the past or present, while it now again threatens this distracted land with ruin and perhaps the loss of its nationality. On the other hand, whenever Mexico has been on the point of recuperating and attaining to some degree of peace and order and prosperity, it has invariably been by departing from this false and nefarious principle. And how could it be otherwise? A nation can never be organized politically, except in conformity with its social constitution. Unless all its parts and elements, no matter how heterogeneous, are taken into account, and unless all those interests which have de-

veloped and established their rights and precedents are considered, a country will lapse into anarchy and be the hotbed of revolutions as Mexico has been.

In 1821 Augustin Iturbide brought about Mexico's independence precisely by adopting the counter policy to that of the rebels of 1810. These and their followers spilt rivers of blood, and after destroying as far as they could the work of centuries, failed absolutely to attain their end during eleven years of constant fighting. Iturbide in seven months, without shedding a drop of blood, united and liberated Mexico. But then he took the nation as he found it: he respected its history, its character, religion and traditions, and it is only the Liberals' bias and frenzy which have deprived him of his glory as the hero of Mexican independence.

We cannot go into Iturbide's character as a politician, but every one knows that the same elements which had been a cause of disturbance before independence reasserted themselves after its triumph. The country, after Iturbide's tragic death, fell again into chaos. The evil influence of Freemasonry began to be felt; the typical Mexican agitator, with his compeer, the American filibuster, loomed up in the distance; and that particular policy which has always secured the aid of the United States Government in favor of the least respectable elements of Mexico was inaugurated.

However, during the American Civil War the better classes of Mexico reacted and under the name of "Conservators" again made an attempt to reorganize the nation. They failed for reasons which are generally well known. It is not intended here to discuss the merits or advisability of the French intervention, nor the right of the United States to thwart, as they did, what they con-

sidered a European aggression and a danger to themselves; but we may state emphatically that although so many circumstances concurred to its downfall, especially the attitude of the United States of America, the idea of a new Mexican Empire in 1863 was perfectly popular within the country and more than justified by its history. It could be seen clearly that the republican form of government was not suitable nor in accordance with the social elements and constitution of the land. We could quote a number even of Liberal authors bearing witness to the fact that the immense majority of the nation, its higher and lower classes especially, were in favor of the Empire. The enthusiasm displayed in the reception both of the French troops and of the new sovereigns had no bounds, as any one can read in contemporary documents and subsequent histories. Except for its enemies, within and without, Mexico was united. There was no social question. The masses and classes of the people were not arrayed against each other. The Church was respected and loved throughout the country. There were agitators, petty politicians, traitors, and, above all, bandits high and low, as there are now; but these did not constitute society, and would never have prevailed but for the sympathy and help of the United States. The unpopular Constitution of 1857, and the still more unpopular Reform Laws of 1859 and subsequent years, were nothing but a pretext to rob the Church and diminish her authority and influence, and were a totally artificial growth which the Liberal group had managed to graft on the Mexican nation, and which they enforced after the fall of the Empire just to curry favor with the United States and secure that country's support, in order to control Mexico.

To resume: (1) The Mexicans or Aztecs, before the Spanish conquest, had themselves previously conquered all the other tribes and ruled them only through fear and force.

(2) The Mexican Indians were entirely disaffected towards the Aztec Empire and willingly consented to the Spanish conquest, first, on account of the evils it saved them from; and afterwards, because they conceived a sincere affection for the Kings of Spain, and especially for the Catholic Church and its friars in whom they recognized their protectors and friends.

(3) After the Spanish conquest, though the Mexican hierarchy continued to exist in a way, the Spaniards acted as moderators and arbiters between the higher and lower classes. In this the *macehuales* or common people gained immensely through the Spanish rule, and it explains why they no longer resisted and never again revolted against the Crown of Spain.

(4) When they received the Faith they clung to it and have done so to this day in spite of all the efforts made at different times and by different parties to ravish it from them.

(5) The initiators of Mexican independence in 1810 started on a false basis and did not succeed.

(6) At the time of the accomplishment of Mexican independence by Iturbide, that is in 1821, all the elements of the nation were found united and in harmony with one another, thus winning independence itself under the banner and motto, which was then adopted, of: "Union, religion, independence."

(7) In spite of the failure of the Conservators in their attempt to reorganize the country and found a new Mexican Empire, and the triumph of the Liberals in

1867; so deep and lasting was the Christian spirit breathed into the people in the course of centuries, that no social disintegration took place, though the undermining of religion, society's bulwark, grew apace.

Hence it may be seen that although there was within the Aztec Empire a deep and intense social question at the time of the Spanish conquest, it was put an end to and obliterated in the course of three centuries of peace, interior union and prosperity. Since the *Independencia* and up to the time when President Porfirio Diaz, by his personal prestige and authority came to control the country, it may be safely asserted that, although there had been continuous revolutions and troubles, they emanated from political ambitions and individual passions, but by no means from any social wrongs among the classes in the land.

And now, as the progress of this article has brought us to modern times, the writer thinks himself called upon to protest against any suspicion of bias on his part. He is no politician, and has no other interest at heart but that of justice and truth. If he may entertain a pretension, it is solely that of having taken pains to be thoroughly well informed, and to state the opinion of all decent and responsible people of Mexico, whether they be poor or rich, natives or foreigners.

The unprecedented period of peace, security and credit which Mexico enjoyed during the long presidency of Porfirio Diaz; the downfall of the latter and of his group with the revolution of Madero; the success of this revolution and its sudden collapse in February, 1913; and finally, the resignation of General Huerta under pressure of the American Administration which unreservedly lent its sympathy and assistance to the new

"Constitutionalist Revolution," are all subjects which would require a volume each, and cannot be dismissed in the brief pages of an article. We therefore only refer to them inasmuch as our remarks can serve to strengthen our views regarding Mexico's social question.

No doubt, at this point, some one will say: If not before, now at least you are face to face with a popular movement. You cannot deny the hatred of the people for the *Científicos*, or against the large land-owners and those who cornered labor; the monopolists, the oppressors of the peons, the *caciques*, and the infamous rich who appropriated the public lands of small towns and municipalities; you must confess to a growing sentiment of opposition throughout the nation towards a system of dictatorship and privilege and injustice, such as first Dias and afterwards Huerta pretended to implant. Certainly, somebody will add, Mr. Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America, was not so far wrong, when he spoke, in his Indianapolis speech, of the eighty per cent of Mexicans who were groaning under the tyranny and oppression of the few, evidently including among the latter all the American residents and foreigners.

The answer to all these charges can be quite categorical. As motives for the Madero uprising and what has followed since, the foregoing list of grievances cannot be taken seriously by anybody who is acquainted otherwise but superficially with this country. As specious excuses found by agitators, demagogues, thieves, idle fools and wicked rogues to create anarchy and speculate with a nation's confusion and ruin, they are certainly to be considered clever, though utterly criminal. At the present stage of affairs, they can be clearly detected to have

been the old-time methods to secure for a desperate group the control of the government. The end in view was similar; and the leaders counted on the two essential conditions which had served the same purpose before; namely, the inborn weakness and racial docility of the Mexican people in letting themselves be duped; and the traditional propensity of the United States Government to side with the worst individual and favor the worst causes in Mexico.

As regards Porfirio Diaz—Peace to his ashes!—however great his mistakes, we will not here disparage his memory. Such men as Carranza, Villa and Zapata, if they have done nothing else, have surely worked successfully to cover his faults and to justify, nay, to exalt and glorify his name. Within the wide scope of Liberal achievements in Mexico, his record and theirs stand in marked contrast: the best and the worst can be seen to advantage. In Diaz's time there existed not only political, but also social abuses; everything was not as it should have been. But what was wrong was perhaps not worse than what we see in many civilized countries of the world; and the reforms which were then needed could have been reached sooner and better by other means. This is evident today.

Be this as it may, we contend that Madero's revolution was by no means a social one, any more than were those before it. Its motive was political: "Free suffrage, no reelection," was its program. It was because the people of all classes believed this, that they were for a moment in perfect agreement. Only those who witnessed Madero's triumphal entry into Mexico City, on June 10, 1911, can have an idea of the degree of class union which in reality exists among Mexicans. All

trusted in their political emancipation, and thought that the dawn of civil and religious liberty was at hand. There was never a cry or a threat, much less any act of hostility, even against Porfirio Diaz or his favorite few, the *Científicos*, let alone against the rich, the *haciendados* or the clergy. Dictatorship as a system was alone repudiated and true democratic freedom was the aspiration of all.

When it transpired that something else was intended by the men who came to control the Maderista cause and Madero himself, he and the cause lost all prestige in Mexico, to the extent of making possible within such a short time the revolt of February, 1913. Far be it from us to defend this uprising, and much less the sad end of Madero and Pino Suarez. Yet some allowance must be made for public sentiment and the rights of self-defense. Madero and his advisers, when in power, continued to speak and act and plan like a party, irrespective of the nation, its customs, traditions and religion. They made no secret of it. The anarchical, socialistic and anti-religious tendencies and intentions manifested in their frequent utterances were anything but reassuring. There were individuals in the party who were perfectly honest and true, as there were afterwards in the parties of Carranza, Villa and Zapata; but they gradually began to retire. The others, to Madero's own disgust, for he was only their weak tool, repeatedly asserted that Mexico required a French revolution, "a 1793," and that nothing profitable could be done unless the guillotine was erected, and the heads of the rich, the army and the clergy rolled to the ground.

What happened afterwards, especially the wonderful "Constitutionalist" revolution and its developments,

though painful to refer to, can furnish us with the last and most conclusive proof of what we maintain, namely, that no social question properly so-called originated the sad and interminable conflict of today. The leaders of the three factions, into which the revolution broke up, since they entered on the war path to avenge Madero and save the Mexican people, have given ample proofs of being themselves the worthy successors of those who vented their radicalism in Madero's time. This is not astonishing. But what is astonishing to a degree, is the favor they found in the eyes of the United States. We are not concerned with words, or proclamations and promises: we have the long list of deeds, which the whole world knows of, to judge by. From north to south, and from the Gulf to the Pacific Ocean, the inhabitants of Mexico have met at the hands of the revolution with nothing but outrages, misery and starvation: while the conduct of their reformers and liberators speaks for itself. Rapine, murder, violence to women, untold sacrileges and cruel persecution against the Catholic religion and its priests and nuns; ill treatment of individuals and wholesale confiscation of property, without any regard for Mexicans or foreigners; the expulsion of diplomatic personages, the violation of correspondence, the monopoly of railways, the mail and telegraph lines, the absolute domination and control of the press on the part of petty officials in the revolutionary group, and a scandalous rage for speculation with food-stuffs and cattle and other articles of prime necessity, the exportation of these out of the country, in order to obtain their payment in American gold, and the unlimited issue on their part of valueless paper money which they force on the public: such are their deeds. While, on the other hand, being

only revolutionists, they pretend to enact definite laws and establish reforms of a political, social, economic and even religious character, introducing for the purpose, what they have been pleased to call "a pre-constitutional period," presided over by an absolute "First Chief," whose decrees will be beyond appeal.

Meanwhile, we ask, by what authority is all this done, and where do the people come in? The revolution, with its three factions, whatever its ideals and objects at the start, has proved to be nothing but the undisguised organization of the moral scum of the country with a view to exploit the wealth and labor of its peaceful and respectable elements. As to the poor, the weak, the working classes, the peons and their families, they have been the first and saddest victims of the revolution. They have never fared worse; no, not under Diaz, nor even under Huerta. Nor is it true to say, that they have had a hand in the revolution. Far from this, "the eighty per cent" have found their masters, and the United States has unwittingly been instrumental in promoting this thralldom; for since the time of the Aztecs, there never was in this country such tyranny as that of Villa, Zapata and Carranza. It would seem as though the dream of the agitators of 1810 and their successors had been realized at last. We have swung back to 1521, or rather, we are in a worse plight, for then a savage and idolatrous race had to be dealt with, but now we deplore the ruin of a Christian people at the hands of their oppressors. Barring the unruly and subversive elements of Mexico, there is no country in the world where the people are more gentle, forbearing, polite, and charitable. This is noticeable among the poor themselves and reciprocally between the rich and the destitute, as well

as between servants and masters, and in all classes of society. It is in times such as Mexico has gone through these past few years, that the true character of a people can be discerned. And let no one be deceived by such gatherings as the *Casa del Obrero Mundial*, a Ferrer association, which has come into existence at the call of the Carranzista faction. It is an exotic growth, and its failure to excite the lower classes of Mexico City to a general looting of private and commercial houses last February, though officially invited to it by General Alvaro Obregón, the Carranzista authority, and at a time when those lower classes were facing starvation, is certainly the crucial test that there is no social question in Mexico.

When Mexico comes to be well governed, when civil and religious liberty exist, when license is repressed and the better element are protected, instead of being attacked, peace and plenty will reign again. This thrice-happy consummation now depends, after God's wise Providence, on the action of the United States of America. There can be no doubt as to that country's noble and disinterested intentions. If only past mistakes are avoided and a true knowledge of Mexico's social elements and character is acquired, all will be well. That which was lost may quickly be retrieved.

October 17, 1915.

A. DE F.

THE CHURCH AND MEXICO

By E. C. HENDRIX

ONE who is in touch with the active intellectual elements of the fighting factions in Mexico hears much talk about false and true revolutions and how to distinguish between them, for there is an active intellectual element, popular opinion to the contrary notwithstanding. It has a more or less definite organization, a far-reaching and entirely unconsidered influence, and bears a relation to the military organizations unique in the history of world warfare. But that is another story.

Of the many symptoms of insincerity and falsity in the present revolutionary movement the most glaring and pernicious is the effort to make it appear a religious war. Many arguments might be advanced in support of this assertion, but the one which makes all others unnecessary is the fact that, with few possible exceptions, the families of the revolutionary leaders are devout Catholics, and with the knowledge and consent, and frequently the active assistance of the said leaders, they attend to their religious duties as far as circumstances will permit. I am personally acquainted with the family of one revolutionary officer who has been charged with persecuting priests and looting churches. For some months his family lived in the United States, just across the border from the Mexican town where he had his headquarters. It was his invariable custom to send his automobile to take the family to Mass, no matter how urgently it

might be required for other purposes. The antagonism of such a man is the result of external influences acting on his ambition and greed, and not an inner "true revolt" from principle.

During several years of rather confidential association with people and things in Mexico I have never heard a word uttered against the Church. I have heard much ranting about alleged abuses in the Church, delivered for the most part by men of mixed nationality, half Mexican or less, of foreign education, ideas, attachments and sympathies; in short, hired "spell-binders" employed for the specific purpose of inciting the people to acts which would widen the breach and deepen the impression that Mexico is in armed revolt against the Church.

The natural conclusion is that somebody wants something from Mexico which they do not expect to get as long as the Church is there and its influence active. The most important thing for all who love Mexico and desire its peace and prosperity, and all who are concerned with saving a nation to the Church, is to determine the source of that influence.

This did not originate as a religious war, and but for deliberate efforts to that end would never have assumed such an aspect. That such influence has been at work persistently and untiringly is well known, but it has never received the attention it demands. Not only has it been used to incite the inflammable populace to atrocities that otherwise never would have been committed, but it has been used to distort facts, color news, and insidiously mislead the Church in such manner as to make it impossible for her to distinguish between her friends and her enemies, and prevent their cooperation for the restoration of order.

One instance will serve to show how it is done: After a prolonged siege an important city surrendered to a detachment of the revolutionary army. The nuns fled but an old priest stayed on. After the smoke and debris of battle were cleared away he resumed the routine of his peaceful life. Every evening he went and sat on his own particular bench on the plaza facing the open doors of the old church, where he gazed dreamily down the long, darkened aisle at the candles gleaming faintly on the altar, and ever and anon smiled benignly at his parishioners as they made their usual evening *paseo*. The only visible change was that on "plaza nights," when the band played and it was the custom for the officials of high degree to show themselves among the people, there was a new *jefe*, with a new coterie of aids around him. But they saluted the old priest respectfully and for a while all went well.

Schools were opened, stores resumed business, all the people went about the accustomed affairs of life unmolested, and one day the commanding officer requested me to endeavor to get into communication with the nuns and give them a message from him. That message was a request that they return and take charge of their property and open their school, assuring them not only of protection, but of any aid they might require in their work. At the same time he made a general statement about his attitude toward the Church, desiring that the same be made public in the United States. That such action had been taken by him was well known to several members of his staff. Before his intentions could be carried out he was summoned to a distant State of the Republic. Immediately the subordinate officer whom he left in charge banished the old priest to the United

States, looted the church and convent, and turned the soldiers loose in the parochial residence and gardens to hunt for hidden treasures which they believed to be buried there.

The officer who had been recalled from command never returned, and all efforts to communicate with him were fruitless. There are well-authenticated rumors that he was held a prisoner for many weeks while he was being publicly charged with the atrocities being committed by those whom he left behind. The man who was actually guilty drifted from one division of the army to another, serving under one leader and another, and, it is reported, was finally executed for treachery to the last.

Admitting the existence of ignorance and superstition, Mexico is nevertheless a Catholic country, and underneath and through it all is enough of the true Faith to survive. Without attempting to refute any charges, the fact still remains that for centuries the Church in Mexico shed the only ray of light that illumined that benighted land. Here and there along the fringes of civilization were scattered Protestant schools and churches, and in the centers of population free public instruction was being inaugurated, but these were accessible to only a few. On the far deserts, in the midst of waste places, in deep mountain gorges, wherever the people wandered in their hopeless search for an asylum, there the Church followed. There was erected a crude structure of adobe and stone, adorned within by clumsy but loving hands, and there some priest watched over the welfare of the little flock. The farmer who tilled the stony and arid fields, the goat-herd who watched the flocks, the women who ground the corn, and the children who played before the wretched *chozas*, paused from

time to time and looked that way, and morning and evening they betook themselves thither for the comfort and hope which was offered nowhere else.

That priest had no concern with the politics of the country. He had little or no communication with the world outside and no knowledge of what was passing. His sole care was for the welfare of his humble parish, and the outer fields of the little *pueblo* marked the confines of his world. Such churches were to be found throughout the Republic. The most adventurous traveler had not penetrated to a spot where they had not gone before. Now they are deserted, the priest is an exile, the people scattered, and marauding bands of soldiers stable their horses where the devout villagers prayed. The seed of that planting is trampled in the earth but it is not dead. Some day it will spring up and blossom and bear fruit an hundred fold.

If this is indeed a religious war which has for its object the entire elimination of Catholicism from the nation, it is destined to be a long one. It will not end until every woman and child now living in Mexico is dead, until every stone in every cathedral, and every abode in every wayside chapel, and every cross on the far deserts has been laid low and there is not even a memory left to take root in the land.

The soul of Mexico is a dumb and chained soul, but it pleads eloquently with the free and unbound. Its voice is in the deserted churches that lift their silent belfries heavenward; it is in the abandoned convents where wounded boys crawl out into the sunshine of the *patio* and doves flutter like the spirits of forgotten prayers; it is in the anguished eyes which thousands of Mexican women turn toward the United States, holding hidden

in their hearts the faith that in their last extreme hour through the Church here redemption will come.

It is a terrible thing to watch a human being die. It is more terrible to watch the death throes of a great nation. It is caught in the toils of avarice and greed and ambition, and is being slowly strangled before our eyes. Men who are strong and would have been honorable if they had been shown the way, women who are loving and would have been all that it is given woman to be, little children who can do no more than suffer and die, all have been gathered up together into a colossal web from which there appears no escape. Somewhere out of sight are the hands that spread the net and now are drawing the cords inch by inch, slowly and calculatingly crushing out the blood and breath of life. Who is strong enough to loosen the grasp of those awful hands? Who can break the net and set these people free? If not the Church then truly they are doomed!

REFLECTIONS ON MEXICO

WE have been told by an American high in official position, that the present is no time for playing politics. This is true. If the Government is to be taken seriously, there is never a time for playing politics, and as our American referred to the Mexican question his statement is doubly true. The question is lifted far above the grimy pit of politics. It rests in the sphere of humanity. Humanity, common humanity; nothing more.

We have shuddered at the revolting tales that have come from many parts of Europe. Of the deviltry set

loose by Carranza and his following; of the unspeakable cruelty to venerable priests and consecrated virgins; of the wholesale debauching of Mexican womanhood; of these things we have been permitted to hear nothing. Only within the last few weeks has the American press which boasts its liberty to speak the truth without fear and without favor, been allowed to present a faint picture of the hell that has been let loose on Mexico during the last eighteen months.

Now we know something, a little at least, of what that hell has meant. We have heard the pitiful stories of broken-hearted mothers whose daughters have been ravished before their very eyes and in the public streets, by officers of the Carranzista mobs, miscalled armies. A little, but only a little, has been said in our free press of the horrors which men and women who have spent their whole lives in the service of God and their fellows, have been forced to undergo. Of churches polluted in a fashion which only the most degraded of savages could conceive; of orphanages, schools, colleges wantonly destroyed; of a reign of pillage and despotism under the banner of liberty and equality; of these things we have at last been permitted to know something.

And on the heels of this fresh knowledge comes the news that the villain responsible for these horrors has been recognized as the one man capable above all others of restoring peace, happiness, civilization, to Mexico. This man degraded in the eyes of all decent citizens of whatever nationality, this man from whose vile hands the blood and the shame of outraged womanhood can never be washed, is now free to proceed on his diabolical course, strengthened by the official recognition of other nations.

All will now be well. And why? Because a liar has promised henceforth to tell the truth, a murderer that he will no longer imbrue his hands with the blood of women and children, a wanton destroyer that he will forever devote his toiling days and sleepless nights to the peaceful upbuilding of his unhappy country. And the pledge, the guarantee, that these things will be done? Nothing, nothing whatever, beyond the word of a villain.

A QUERY AND AN ANSWER

To the Editor of "America":

Please let me know, at the earliest opportunity, what the attitude of Catholics is toward the official recognition by the United States of the Presidency of any leader of the Mexican revolution.

New York.

L. E. Y.

THE recent decision of the Pan-American conference makes this request very pertinent. The answer is simple, for the attitude of American Catholics who are interested in Mexico is entirely clear and reasonable. They are not in any way concerned with the nation's purely internal affairs, whether these be political, economic or religious. As citizens of this country they are, however, concerned with the attitude of our Government toward Mexico. Such interest is at once their duty and their privilege, for this is a democracy, and since Catholics are true democrats they are unwilling to see the United States committed to a course of action that would appear not only to condone tyranny and excessive brutality, but also to support both. Our Government stands sponsor for the Mexican revolutionists be-

fore the world; and the Mexican revolutionists have been tyrannous and brutal. By decrees and other acts they have interfered with worship in a most meticulous way, they have attacked God and religion, they have committed excesses that shock every man whose sense of decency has not been destroyed. They have defiled churches, sacred vessels, vestments and the Blessed Sacrament; they have tortured some priests and murdered others; they have killed two Christian Brothers, and as for their treatment of Sisters, it cannot be described. In short, allowing for all exaggerations, it is safe to say that the Mexican revolutionists have written a new chapter in the history of tyranny and brutality. And though not long since Carranza taunted Villa on account of some of these deeds, yet not one of them has been repudiated. Indeed, the ideals that prompted them have been exalted in speech and writing. This is not democracy, it is not even civilization, and to give official recognition to men who stand for such acts is to commit the country to a policy that the nation has repudiated time and again. In fact our nation is a protest against just such a policy. This is the opinion of Catholics, and at one time at least, our Government true to the traditional policy held exactly the same views.

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